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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001147

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOISTS AGREE TO RELEASE "CHILD SOLDIERS"

REF: KATHMANDU 01015

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires, a.i., Randy Berry. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)
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11. (C) SUMMARY: Under pressure from the visiting UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Maoists and the government of Nepal have reached an agreement on the discharge of the 4,008 disqualified combatants from Maoist cantonments. The discharge will begin on December 27 and conclude within 40 days, followed by six months of intensive UN monitoring and retraining. The Maoists promise not to re-enlist the discharged combatants, but the two-year UN verification process is vague. The removal of the disqualified and minor combatants from the cantonments is a positive step, and could reinvigorate negotiations on the integration and rehabilitation of the 19,000 "verified" Maoist combatants. End summary.

UN Pushed Hard for Agreement

12. (SBU) The agreement on an action plan can be credited to work by the UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict Radhika Coomaraswamy and Nepal UN offices. Under UN Security Council Resolution 1612, the Maoists are identified as an organization that uses child soldiers. The Special Representative made it clear that it would be difficult to remove the Maoists from this list if they unilaterally discharged their child soldiers without agreeing to an action plan proposed by the UN and signed off on by the government of Nepal. After several rewrites, all three parties came to agreement on this final plan. (Comment: In a telling sign of the international pressure behind the agreement, at the signing ceremony Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal gave his entire speech in English. A more skeptical opinion is that Dahal's choice of languages was meant to minimize press coverage.)

Action Plan

13. (U) The action plan has three stages: discharge, verification and monitoring, and rehabilitation. The discharge phase is scheduled to begin December 27 and all disqualified combatants will be removed from the cantonments

within 40 days. The Maoist People's Liberation Army will hold a release ceremony for the combatants before their departure. UNICEF and the UNDP will coordinate all of the discharge logistics, including certifying the identity of the combatants, issuing photo-identification cards, and arranging for the combatants to be transported from the cantonment site to the nearest public transportation hub city. Each combatant will receive R10,000 for transportation and resettlement costs. Previous agreements to send the combatants to centralized "transition centers" (reftel) have been scrapped.

Verifying Where Everyone Goes and What They Do

14. (SBU) The verification and monitoring process has been split into two parts. First, the UN will create a "monitoring body" tentatively comprised of UNICEF and OHCHR staff, which will visit the combatants after they leave the cantonments. The body will also be allowed to visit "any relevant areas" to determine whether disqualified combatants reentered Maoist military or paramilitary units. UNICEF Country Representative Gillian Mellsop said that, in addition to the cantonments, they viewed Maoist party and YCL offices to be "relevant areas" and intended to conduct surprise inspections. (Note: The disqualified minors are not supposed to participate in violent or paramilitary activities, although it is not specifically prohibited in the action plan.) Second, an UNICEF taskforce will independently monitor the Maoists using local and international NGO

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contractors. If, after one year, the taskforce determines the minors have not reentered Maoist military or paramilitary organizations, the UN will delist them--although the taskforce will continue to monitor their status for an additional year. (Note: The earliest the Maoists could be delisted would be February 2011.) The taskforce is separate from the six month monitoring body at the Maoists' request. According to Coomaraswamy the Maoists do not trust the NGO community to be objective monitors.

Rehabilitation Plans

15. (SBU) The final phase is to offer the combatants training packages in four fields: education, health training, business activities, and vocational training. The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction will coordinate the training, and it will be implemented by local partners. UNICEF will use its task force partners to encourage participation in the training programs, and estimates 50 percent of the combatants will participate. Coomaraswamy said Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal promised to encourage participation as well.

Minors Will Likely Stay Maoist

16. (C) Despite overall praise for the agreement, UNICEF, UNDP, and UNMIN all acknowledged the difficulties with implementation and monitoring. The largest problem will be preventing the discharged, the majority of whom are now over 18, from rejoining Maoist institutions. During the action plan signing ceremony December 16, UNDP head Robert Piper said, "we know through conversations that many of you carry a strong sense of social activism, and we hope you will channel it in the spirit of democracy." These are some of the most committed Maoists in the rank and file, and it is naive to think they will walk away from political involvement, or that the Maoists would let them. Mellsop was confident UNICEF's network of contacts would notice if significant numbers of disqualified minors began enrolling in the YCL or other violent organizations.

Comment

17. (C) The disqualified combatants had become a major roadblock in the larger integration and rehabilitation debate. With their imminent departure from the cantonments, Post is hopeful that the parties can begin to make decisions on the overall integration and rehabilitation of the People's Liberation Army. However, there is less optimism for the future of the discharged. Despite the commitments and UN monitoring plan it is likely the discharged will continue to serve the party in the YCL or other similar organizations.
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